

After eleven years of armed insurgency, a window of opportunity for peace and reconciliation opened in Nepal with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Government of Nepal and the Maoists in November 2006, the promulgation of an interim constitution, and the formation of an interim parliament that included the Maoists.



In August 2006, the U.S. Agency for International Development's Nepal Transition Initiatives (NTI) began a program to support a peaceful, democratic transition in Nepal. In close coordination with other USAID programs, NTI seeks to positively support the political situation as it evolves by increasing access to information and diversifying public debate on issues critical to political transition, and by increasing local-level engagement and participation in the peace process.

PROGRAM GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the USAID/NTI program is to positively affect the current political transition in Nepal. The objectives are to:

- Increase access to information and diversify public debate on issues critical to the political transition; and,
- Increase local-level engagement and participation in the peace process. USAID/NTI works closely with its implementing partner, Chemonics International, Inc., to implement appropriate interventions during Nepal's evolving political transition.

USAID/NTI's flexibility and fast-response capabilities uniquely enable the program to implement a wide variety of activities, such as supporting strengthening the media, facilitating community

stabilization, and providing information to diversify public debate on the political transition process. To date, the program has approved 295 small-grant activities worth more than \$10 million.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

- NTI has supported efforts to increase awareness of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections, and constitutional issues through local-level initiatives and wide-reaching radio and television programs targeting different groups of Nepali society.

- Following the CA elections, NTI supported the Secretariat of the Legislative Parliament to establish and maintain a media resource center for journalists, a press conference hall, and an internal broadcasting system to increase public access to the CA proceedings. NTI has also supported a resource center for CA representatives and the general public to increase access to information and trainings in support of the political transition.

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- USAID supported establishment of the first community FM radio station in the remote district of Humla.
- USAID promoted voters awareness and timely news and information through major radio, newspaper and television stations covering all 75 districts of Nepal.

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- Media strengthening remains an important area of focus for NTI. Throughout the country, NTI is supporting the establishment and growth of local radio stations aiming to increase the Nepali public's access to information on the political transition, particularly in remote and underserved areas. One important activity supports local radio stations in gathering public questions and input through call-in programs, and subsequently connecting communities with their local government officials, political party officials, civil society members, and CA representatives. These programs provide local communities with a peaceful outlet to put forth their concerns and offer input into the political transition process. Other Media strengthening activities have included:

- Promoting journalists inter-ethnic exchange visits to the Terai and hilly areas.
- Supporting in the creation of media Code of Conduct for media organization, governing responsible media conducts and regulating the entire media sector.